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accordance with scientific principles, seek for historical truth; and dishonest towards the unsuspecting reader in whose eyes dust is thrown by empty protestations of affection for the books of the Bible and their writers.

H. OORT.

SIEGFRIED ON ECCLESIASTES AND CANTICLES.

Handkommentar zum Alten Testament. Prediger und Hoheslied übersetzt und erklärt, von C. SIEGFRIED. (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.)

THE announcement of a commentary on Ecclesiastes by Dr. Siegfried of Jena could scarcely fail to excite expectation. The learned professor was believed to have given long ago some special attention to the book; and, besides, his researches in Jewish Hellenism and Philo, his *Grammatik der neuhebräischen Sprache*, and the *Hebräisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, executed in co-operation with Stade, might be regarded as indicating special qualifications for the task he has now undertaken. If the present work does not seem altogether worthy of its distinguished author, we may at once admit that it sets forth positions which appear to us at once notable and sound, even if they are not entirely new.

There is, first, the assertion that the book exhibits the old Hebrew language in its last stage of development, and making a marked approach to the idiom of the Mishnah; secondly, that the book was written in the Greek and not in the Persian period; thirdly, that it shows traces of Greek thought; and, lastly, that *Koheleth* is equivalent primarily to קהל חכמים, "an assembly of sages."

With regard to the third position, our author asserts that, whatever may be thought as to the evidential force of alleged parallels in Greek philosophical literature, the fact of Greek influence is nevertheless to be regarded as no longer in dispute. The question now to be decided is, whether this influence was greater or less¹. Then—as to

¹ "Es dreht sich nur um ein mehr oder weniger." On the causes of the change which has occurred with regard to this question in recent years it is not necessary for me now to dilate. When Dr. Siegfried says (p. 20, note) that the influence of Greek philosophy was first suggested by Van der Palm, he is in error. Van der Palm maintained the Solomonic authorship against what had been said by Grotius. And what is said in the same note concerning Zirkel and Graetz may also mislead.

the fourth and last position—that קהלת is equivalent to קהל חכמים, an assembly of sages or philosophers; this was suggested more than twenty years ago by the writer of this review. The designation of such an assembly personified would be, not unnaturally, feminine, that gender being used in the case of other personified assemblages of men, as cities and peoples. Moreover, an additional reason for the gender presents itself, if Koheleth is equivalent to חכמה, “wisdom”; but Koheleth, personifying an assembly of wise men or philosophers, would obviously represent wisdom in the concrete. The identification of this concrete wisdom with Solomon need occasion no insuperable difficulty, if the great Hebrew monarch was conceived of as having already attained all the results and achievements of subsequent philosophers. The explanation of Koheleth as “one who is an assembly” has been said to be artificial; but in fact it is the only natural and grammatical explanation. קהלת would be a denominative form from the noun קהל, the verb קהל not being found elsewhere in Kal. That Koheleth means a lecturer or debater, or “one who convenes an assembly,” is not in accordance with grammar, and, moreover, cannot be made out from the rendering of the LXX ἐκκλησιαστής. Dr. Siegfried arrives at the conclusion that קהל = קהל חכמים by a different method¹. He adduces the proper name ספרת, of Neh. vii. 57, which has the article prefixed in Ezr. ii. 55. This name, we are told, denoted originally a society or guild of scribes or scriptural scholars, but was subsequently used as the name of a single prominent scholar. What occurred with regard to קהל was analogous. From representing an ἐκκλησία of Jewish Hellenists, the word came to denote a single distinguished teacher from such an assembly. And with regard to this sense of ἐκκλησία, Dr. Siegfried refers pertinently to Eccclus. xxxviii. 33 (cf. Tyler's *Ecclesiastes*, p. 51 sqq.). But there is no small difficulty in the way of our adopting such an explanation of the name *Koheleth*. In close vicinity to *Sophereth* in both Ezra and Nehemiah occurs also the name פִּקְרֵת הַצִּבְיִים, “snarer of gazelles,” evidently the name of an individual. Now, if Dr. Siegfried is right we should have, by a parity of reasoning, to come to the conclusion that *Pokereth hatstsebayim* denoted originally a guild of gazelle-catchers, a somewhat improbable conclusion. It is better to regard both *Sophereth* and *Pokereth* as feminines denoting office or function (cf. Siegfried, *Neuhebr. Gram.*, p. 54). But, however attained,

¹ Dr. Siegfried connects the transfer of the name *Koheleth* to Solomon with what is said in 1 Kings viii. 1 of that monarch having assembled (יָקַד) the elders of Israel. But if this were so we might suppose that the name would have been *Makheleth* rather than *Koheleth*.

the position that *Koheleth* properly denotes an assembly of sages or philosophers is of very great importance. This, taken together with the manifest traces in the book of Greek thought, and its approach to Rabbinical Hebrew and the Mishnah, may render possible a fairly complete solution of the great biblical enigma of Ecclesiastes. Especially are we able to explain the unity, combined with multiplicity, which characterizes the book. There is unity, because the one collective personality *Koheleth* is everywhere present from i. 2 to xii. 8. There is plurality; there is diversity, on account of the plurality of philosophers speaking by the mouth of *Koheleth*.

Dr. Siegfried, however, comes to a new and surprising conclusion. He maintains that the mass of complete contradictions is so great that to reduce the whole to unity is impossible. The book was the work of an undefined number of writers. Four are more conspicuous. Then several others, whose number is not stated, may be slumped together as Q⁵. The joint production of these writers came—as well it might—into utter confusion. A redactor or editor finding the state of things so deplorable, was unable, it would appear, to reduce the confusion (*Wirrwarr*) to harmony. But he did what he could. He furnished the *nostri farrago libelli* with a superscription (i. 1) and a concluding formula (xii. 8). Subsequently came three epilogists to whom we owe xii. 9–14. The last verses, 13, 14, betray something of the Pharisee, with a belief in a future judgment.

But a word more must be said on Siegfried's four principal contributors to Ecclesiastes. The foundation of the book was laid by a Jew who had made shipwreck of the faith. As a thinker he did not hesitate to put things in the cold hard light of reason and reality. All is under the domination of natural, not moral, laws. The course of things in the world shows that there is no divine moral government. The lot of man is a constant laborious, but vain, endeavour. For this there are no pleasures which can afford compensation. Pleasure rests on an illusion. Even in wisdom, peace and satisfaction are not to be found; for the struggle to gain wisdom is abortive. The founder of Ecclesiastes (Q¹) was, in a word, a confirmed pessimist. His work seems to have interested a Jew of Epicurean and Sadducean bias (Q²). Eating and drinking, in his view, gave a very real pleasure. To him life was beautiful; and pleasant it was for the eyes to behold the sun. Another reader of the pessimist's work belonged to the society of the wise (Q³). He could not endure the disparagement of wisdom and of the endeavour to obtain it. Such disparagement could proceed only from the fool who "folds his hands, and eats his own flesh." The fourth commentator (Q⁴) was a *chasid*, a man who interposed religious, moral, and pious remarks, as occasion offered.

Now if, as Dr. Siegfried thinks, a pessimistic view of the world was abhorrent to Judaism, it may seem strange that these commentators should have taken so much trouble about the pessimist's work. They would not have troubled themselves about the work, explains our author, if there had not been the venerated name of Solomon at its head; this fact, indeed, saved it from destruction. But, unfortunately, the name of Solomon does not stand, and never did stand, at the head of the book. If Dr. Siegfried answers that though the actual name was not there, the Solomonic authorship was to be inferred from the superscription, then, however, according to his own account, the superscription was, as already stated, the work of a later editor. We have here, as elsewhere, evidence of apparent haste in composition unworthy both of our author and of the great Hebrew memorial on which he was engaged.

The foundation-work of the pessimist is to be placed, it would seem, soon after 200 B. C., and the commentators were working for a hundred years later. Dr. Siegfried does not deny the validity of the argument drawn from accordances between Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus, showing that the former book was written before the latter. The son of Sirach, in his view, may have been acquainted with the kernel of Ecclesiastes. But, even upon Dr. Siegfried's showing, there is evidence that the author of Ecclesiasticus must have had his predecessor's work before him in a fairly complete state. There is one correspondence, that between Ecclus. xxxiii. 13-15 and Eccles. vii. 13-15, on which the present writer has strongly insisted. Dr. C. Wright says of it that, when examined in the original, the correspondence appears so remarkable that it cannot be regarded as fortuitous. The passage from Ecclesiastes may be thus translated:—"Behold the work of God; for who can straighten what he hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity enjoy thyself, but in the day of adversity behold. God, indeed hath set the one in correspondence to the other, because man findeth nothing after him: I saw all in the days of my vanity: there is a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man prolonging his life in his wickedness." According to Dr. Siegfried, from "Behold" to "crooked" was a comment by the *Chasid*, Q¹. Then, from "In the day" to "nothing after him" was an interpolation of the Epicurean and Sadducee Q². The rest of the passage was the work of the pessimist Q¹. It is scarcely necessary to go farther in order to show that Dr. Siegfried's conclusions as to the structure of Ecclesiastes are little better than a disordered dream. The late Dean Plumptre sketched an "ideal biography" of the author of Ecclesiastes. He was a Judæan agriculturist, who, after

he had obtained "the portion of goods falling to him," emigrated to Alexandria, and in due time was admitted to a place among the philosophers. He found himself in a bewildering whirl of words, and conflict of opinions. The result, after varied personal experiences, was the writing of his book. This "ideal biography," it is true, was little or nothing better than a romance; but, romance though it was, it may be said to have been sane and sober as compared with the result of Dr. Siegfried's lucubrations.

Repeated reference is made by our author to the Viennese professor and Syriac scholar, G. Bickell. Whether Prof. Bickell would or would not approve Dr. Siegfried's conclusions, there is reason to think that they have been framed and put forth under the influence of Bickell's theorizings¹. The views of the last-named scholar concerning Job and Ecclesiastes have been in good measure made known in English by a recent work from Dr. Dillon. No doubt, with regard to some books of the Old Testament, conclusions undreamt of by our fathers have gained wide acceptance, as the result of careful induction; and these are not likely to be reversed. This, however, affords no ground for extravagant and baseless hypotheses. There is not a shadow of evidence that Ecclesiastes was a gradually formed mosaic. After much attention given to the book during a long series of years, the present writer is convinced that it has come down to us substantially as it left the hands of the unknown Hebrew philosopher, its original author.

A very few other places can be noticed. In ii. 24 there is no adequate reason for altering the text, and translating, "There is no other good for men than to eat," &c. A comparison of the Hebrew in verse 3 leads towards the conclusion that the author is speaking of the supreme good for man, τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν, of Aristotle (cf. *Academy*, Jan. 11, 1896). In iii. 11 to render עֲלָם by "the world," though this sense is Mishnic, is in accordance with other phenomena of our book. Siegfried gives "die Zukunft," a rendering which may be said to be inadmissible. Of the very important word עֵשׂ at the end of iii. 17 it should certainly not be said without qualification

¹ But, with reference to this matter some remarks made by Dr. Paul Haupt should not be overlooked. The scholar just named observes: "The book we have is not intact. It reminds me of the remains of a daring explorer who has met with some terrible accident, leaving his shattered form exposed to the encroachments of all sorts of foul vermin. It is a mistake to suppose that the hypertrophic [*sic*] portions are the work of one interpolator. In some cases there are half a dozen parallel strata of glosses."—(*Papers of Oriental Club, Philadelphia*, p. 254.) Comment is scarcely necessary.

that it is absent from the LXX, even if Swete has excluded *ἐκεῖ* from the text in his edition of 1887. With regard to *הַבְּסִילִים* in iv. 17, we are told that these are the same as *עַם הָאָרֶץ* of Dan. vi. 12, &c. The phrase in question does not occur in the passage cited; but Dr. Siegfried cannot be supposed ignorant of the fact that in Biblical Hebrew *עַם הָאָרֶץ* is nowhere used with the Talmudic sense here implied.

Perhaps hereafter Dr. Siegfried may give us a treatise on Ecclesiastes more worthy of this wonderful book, and, it may be added, of his own reputation as a biblical scholar. Mention should not be omitted of the portion of the work treating of the linguistic peculiarities of Ecclesiastes. This is not unlikely to be regarded as the most valuable portion; but even this should not be unreservedly followed.

There is some satisfaction in passing on to the portion of Dr. Siegfried's volume which is concerned with the Canticles. Here we have no extravagant theory like that proposed with respect to the structure of Ecclesiastes, though there is not unqualified regard for the Masoretic text. At the present day few scholars are likely to accept the allegorical interpretations in which theologians formerly delighted. The majority of interpreters would seem to give preference to the dramatic theory; and this has obviously in its favour the seeming chorus of the daughters of Jerusalem, and the repeated question, "Who is this?" and in various places the existence of a dialogue is not to be mistaken. There are, however, as our author justly points out, facts which prevent the book from being regarded in its present state as a drama. It may be doubted whether the interpreter of the Canticles gains very much from Wetzstein's description of the nuptial customs of the Syrian peasantry, and of the threshing-dray equipped and furnished for a week as a bridal throne, and the bride and bridegroom being saluted as king and queen, &c. But however this may be, accepting the dramatic hypothesis, each interpreter, says our author, treats the book as though it were moist clay, out of which he can form what image he pleases. Dr. Siegfried regards the book as a collection of ten constituent poetical elements, of which some have been mutilated, or have had additions made to them. The indications favourable to the dramatic theory cannot be, however, easily explained away. The suggestion has been made that the book may be a dramatic fragment. But then a question arises as to the reason of the imperfection or mutilation. There is, perhaps, some evidence tending towards the conclusion that the book has been expurgated, but certainly not evidence sufficient to justify the assertion of this as a fact. If there has been expurgation, it was only imperfectly executed. Dr. Siegfried remarks on the detailed

delineation of bodily charms in bride and bridegroom as being quite consistent with oriental taste, and not written down for us. In the East, he says, the dictum *naturalia non sunt turpia* is accepted to the fullest extent. In this connexion, it may be remarked, there are several places where the LXX translators clearly read ׀׀, though the Masoretic text points with *cholem*. At vii. 12 A. V. renders, "Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, [whether] the tender grape appear, [and] the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves." The LXX renders the last clause ἐκεῖ δώσω τοὺς μαστοὺς μου σοί, reading ׀׀, the sense of which is rendered sufficiently clear by a comparison of Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8, 21; Prov. v. 19. But, even if the word were printed with *cholem*, the general sense could scarcely be different, though the expression would be somewhat milder. There is an obvious similarity between vii. 12 and vi. 11, 12. The latter, according to A. V. is, "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, [and] to see whether the vine flourished, [and] the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me [like] the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Dr. Siegfried says that there are in verse 12 "nur zusammenhangslose Worte." "Wir sind überzeugt, dass hier nur Bruchstücke aus einer Versreihe vorliegen, die den Liebesgenuss schilderte." That there is a figurative description of sexual rapture in the being "made like the chariots of Ammi-nadib" is likely enough, though it may be questioned whether there is the want of coherence which our author alleges. It is important, however, to observe that the LXX has, before this enigmatical description, the same words as in vii. 12 ἐκεῖ δώσω τοὺς μαστοὺς μου σοί. And it seems at least possible that the corresponding Hebrew has been deleted in order that the passage might not seem too gross. But whether the evidence altogether would warrant the conclusion that the Hebrew text has been expurgated it is not necessary now to attempt to decide. Before arriving at a decision, it would be desirable to take into account some extraneous facts, including the euphemistic or more decorous expressions not infrequently found in the Keri.

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